

OVER FIFTY AND BACK TO SCHOOL  
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ANNCR: DATELINE: WASHINGTON -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE NATIONS CAPITOL -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, A REPORT PREPARED BY ALINA ZERANSKI ABOUT A NEW KIND OF STUDENT APPEARING IN GROWING NUMBERS IN COLLEGE CLASSROOMS.

NARR: THE ACTIVISTS FOR EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN QUESTIONED THE NEED FOR IT BUT TO PEOPLE LIKE MARJORIE SMITH IT WAS A GOD SEND. TWO YEARS AGO A SEPARATE WOMEN'S CENTER WAS OPENED AT THE ANNADALE CAMPUS OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE. AND NOW FIFTY-YEAR-OLD MARJORIE SMITH IS THANKFUL FOR THE SUPPORT SHE RECEIVED AT THE CENTER IN HER FIRST SHAKY MONTHS IN THE CLASSROOM. MARJORIE SMITH IS BUT ONE OF THE THOUSANDS OF MATURE WOMEN RESUMING THEIR FORMAL EDUCATION IN TODAY'S AMERICA. THIS TREND IS ESPECIALLY APPARENT IN JUNIOR COLLEGES, THESE EASILY ACCESSIBLE INSTITUTIONS, OFFERING THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF STUDY AT A UNIVERSITY LEVEL. NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY JUNIOR COLLEGE IS A TYPICAL ONE AND IT HAS A TOTAL ENROLLMENT OF 27, 000. ITS FIVE CAMPUSES SERVE FIVE SUBURBAN COUNTIES IN THE WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA. THEY ARE MIDDLE CLASS COMMUNITIES WHERE NOT SO LONG AGO THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN WERE MAINLY DEVOTED TO THE CARE OF THEIR HOMES.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- TRIGG

"QUITE A NUMBER OF OUR STUDENTS ARE IN MY OPINION HIGHLY MOTIVATED, SERIOUS STUDENTS, SEEKING A SECOND CAREER AFTER MOTHERHOOD AND RAISING A FAMILY. THEY COME BACK TO SCHOOL BECAUSE THEIR CHILDREN ARE IN SCHOOL AND THEY ARE IN SOME CASES BORED WITH BEING AT HOME. THEY COME BACK TO SCHOOL IN MANY OF OUR SERIOUS PROGRAMS LIKE OUR NURSING PROGRAM OR ARE SEEKING A FULL DEGREE IN TERMS OF A BACHELOR'S DEGREE AND TRANSFERRING IN BUSINESS AREAS, LIKE THIS. THEY WANT TO GO OUT AND WORK. AND THEN OF COURSE, WE DO HAVE THOSE STUDENTS WHO ARE TAKING JUST ONE OR TWO CLASSES, THEY ARE PART TIME. THE MAJORITY OF THE STUDENTS THAT I WORK WITH ARE VERY SERIOUS ABOUT GETTING A DEGREE AND HAVING A CAREER INDEPENDENT OF THE FAMILY."

NARR: THAT WAS MARY TRIGG, COORDINATOR OF COUNSELORS. THERE ARE 12,000 STUDENTS ENROLLED AT THE ANNANDALE CAMPUS AND OVER HALF ARE WOMEN. AND OUT OF THESE, 53 PERCENT RANGE IN AGE FROM 25 TO 45, WHILE MANY OTHERS ARE WELL OVER FIFTY. THESE OLDER STUDENTS MAKE QUITE AN IMPACT ON THE PROGRAMS, LEVELS OF STUDY AND TEACHING. THEY PRESENT A SPECIAL CHALLENGE TO THE FACULTY. AS MARY TRIGG EXPLAINS IT:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- TRIGG

"THEY DO VERY WELL. WE HAVE A TERM FOR THEM, THEY ARE AVERAGE-RAISERS BECAUSE OF THEIR BEING HIGHLY MOTIVATED. AND THEY USUALLY PREPARE THEMSELVES VERY WELL IN TERMS OF STUDY SKILLS. MOST OLDER WOMEN KNOW WELL HOW TO ORGANIZE THEIR TIME. THEY HAVE ORGANIZED THEIR WHOLE FAMILIES FOR THE LAST TEN OR FIFTEEN YEARS, SO THEY ARE VERY GOOD AT ORGANIZING THEIR TIME. THEY USUALLY DO EXTREMELY WELL IN THEIR CLASSES AND FAILURE IS A VERY DIFFICULT THING FOR THEM TO HANDLE."

NARR: THESE WOMEN ARE MOST INCREDIBLY HARD-WORKING. THEY AGONIZE OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF RESULTS SLIGHTLY LESS THAN EXCELLENT. THEY FEEL THE NEED TO PROVE THEMSELVES. THEIR RICH RESERVE OF EXPERIENCE AND INSIGHT HELPS THEM ESPECIALLY IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES. THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NARR: (CONT'D) ACCEPTS EVERYONE SEEKING ADMISSION AND ITS CAMPUS AND MODERN BUILDINGS ARE SPACIOUS. TUITION IS VERY LOW BECAUSE THE STATE COVERS EXPENSES. THE ONLY REQUIREMENT IS TO BE AT LEAST SEVENTEEN.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- TRIGG

"FOR THE WOMAN, LET'S SAY, WHO DIDN'T FINISH HIGH SCHOOL OR WHO HAS BEEN OUT OF SCHOOL FOR 15 OR 20 YEARS, WE HAVE A WHOLE DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAM WHICH HELPS HER DEVELOP HER ENGLISH, HER MATHEMATICAL SKILLS .. TO BRING HER UP TO A LEVEL OF COLLEGE WORK. WE DON'T GIVE HER TRANSFERABLE GRADES FOR THESE COURSES, BUT WE DO GIVE HER THE SKILLS SO SHE CAN BEGIN ON A COLLEGE LEVEL WHEN SHE IS READY."

NARR: MANY WOMEN SPEND THE FIRST QUARTER OR TWO ON THIS PREPARATORY PROGRAM. THEY ALSO ATTEND SEMINARS AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER ON CHOOSING CAREERS AND STUDY SKILLS. THEY DISCUSS WITH THEIR PEERS AND COUNSELORS THE PROBLEMS OF HANDLING FAMILY VERSUS SCHOOL OBLIGATIONS, OR MARITAL PROBLEMS. SOME HUSBANDS DON'T EASILY ACCEPT IT WHEN WIVES LEAVE THEM ALONE WITH THE CHILDREN TO ATTEND CLASSES OR NEGLECT HOUSEWORK TO STUDY. AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER, IT FREQUENTLY IS POINTED OUT THAT NEW INTERESTS AND THE SHARING OF IDEAS CAN BRING A BETTER BALANCE TO A MARRIAGE -- WHEN A WOMAN STANDS UP FOR HERSELF AND INSTEAD OF BEING A DEPENDENT HOUSEWIFE, BECOMES AN EQUAL PARTNER. COUNSELORS FIND THAT MARRIED STUDENTS FEEL REALLY SUCCESSFUL ONLY WHEN THEY ARE NOT JUST GETTING GOOD GRADES, BUT MANAGE TO MAINTAIN A GOOD HOME LIFE AS WELL.

BETTIE LOU PARBERY IS A MOTHER OF FOUR YOUNG CHILDREN. A FEW YEARS AGO SHE WENT BACK TO THE UNIVERSITY, GOT A MASTER'S DEGREE, AND NOW SHE IS A SPECIAL COUNSELOR FOR WOMEN RESUMING THEIR EDUCATION. SHE UNDERSTANDS THEIR PROBLEMS.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- PARBERY

"SHE HAS BEEN TAKING CARE OF HER FAMILY, TAKING CARE OF HER HUSBAND, TAKING CARE OF EVERYBODY BUT HERSELF, AND SHE SUDDENLY REALIZES THAT IN THE PROCESS, SHE HAS LOST HER SENSE OF HERSELF. SO, THE WOMEN ARE COMING BACK. THEY ARE ENTERING SCHOOL AND ATTEMPTING TO TAKE COURSES. SOME OF THEM ARE TAKING A TWO-YEAR DEGREE, SOME OF THEM ARE PLANNING TO TRANSFER FOR A FOUR-YEAR DEGREE. MANY OF THEM ARE DECIDING THAT THEY WANTED TO GO BACK TO WORK. THE PROBLEM IS THAT THEY COME BACK NOT ALL SURE THAT THEY CAN SUCCEED, LACKING A LOT OF SELF-CONFIDENCE, NEEDING A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF SUPPORT FROM THE COUNSELING STAFF AND FROM OTHER WOMEN WHO ARE ALREADY IN THE PROCESS."

NARR: THESE MATURE STUDENTS ARE VERY INTENSE IN THEIR WORK. THEY ALSO OFTEN HAVE A PAINFUL FEELING OF GUILT BECAUSE, FOR A CHANGE, THEY ARE DOING SOMETHING FOR THEMSELVES. BUT ALL THIS IS COMPENSATED FOR BY A TREMENDOUS SENSE OF DISCOVERY AND EXCITEMENT THAT THEY FIND ON THEIR NEW ROAD OF LEARNING.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE, WASHINGTON, D.C. -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE NATIONS CAPITAL BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, YOU HEARD ABOUT MATURE WOMEN STUDENTS AT THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE. NEXT -----  
ANOTHER DATELINE.

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